

Reaching Family Life Professionals On-line:

Best Practices From the Evolution of the Family Life E-seminar

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Objective of Family Life E-seminar

- To provide educators with a better understanding of specific family life topics.
- To identify ways this information could be applied to programs and services intended to meet the needs of the target audience in their communities.
- <http://hec.osu.edu/eseminars/>

Seminar Topics and Tools

	Topic	Days	Teaching Tools
2001	Stepfamilies	3	Papers
2002	Marriage	5	Papers, Articles
2003	Adolescent Sexuality	5	Papers, Articles
2005	Grandparents Raising Grandchildren	5 (x2)	Papers, Articles, Videos
2006	Relationship and Marital Enrichment	12	Papers, Flash Presentations

"Research based information...Great wealth of reliable sources of background information and educational materials... It is very helpful to have so much more to read and study after the e-seminar."

The Participants

	2001	2002	2003	2005	2006
Expert Panelists (N)	5	6	6	10	9
Registered (N)	45	56	64	173	111
Prior registrant (%)	--	48%	23%	9%	24%
Extension (%)	92%	89%	75%	63%	70%
States represented (N)	2	6	10	36	34
Yrs Experience (range)	1-35	1-33	.5-36	0-36	1-36
Yrs Experience (mean)	17	18	18	16	18

"I feel that I was able to take advantage of the work of many knowledgeable persons, and the fact that these were research-based was very beneficial to me in my work."

Level of Participation (Webct)

	2001	2002	2003	2005	2006
Participated (N)	38	49	57	142	92
Logged on 60% of days	77%	55%	57%	52%	20%
Total posted messages	126	157	169	781	436
Posted by participants	38%	45%	67%	61%	56%
Posted ≥ 1 messages	46%	34%	49%	63%	50%
Read $\geq 50\%$ messages	54%	55%	50%	39%	20%

"I liked the fact that it allows you to... "talk to the panelist directly. It's also nice to see what other participants have to share."

Level of Participation (Evaluation)

	2001	2002	2003	2005	2006
Evaluations (N)	30	30	29	100	51
Total # papers	5	7	6	10	8
Read $\geq 50\%$ of papers	--	77%	83%	61%	52%
Total hrs invested (M)	12	16	9	12	19

"I found many competing things to do when I wasn't actually at an in-service where I am forced to leave the other work behind and just pay attention to the in-service information."

"I did not give myself enough time during the week to take full advantage."

Instructional Materials

	2003	2005	2006
Read instructions	93%	98%	92%
Read helpful tips	97%	84%	75%
Read FAQs	83%	85%	73%
Read discussion board tips	69%	90%	71%
Instruction info helpful	97%	99%	98%

"This was my first experience with an on-line class and I loved it. The instructions and "how to's" were helpful and easy to understand."

"Honestly speaking, I didn't think the conference call would of provided any help... but I'm glad I participated. The information came in handy when reading the discussions!!"

Comfort with Discussion Board

Mean Score (% Comfortable/Very Comfortable)*

	2002	2003	2005	2006
Pre-seminar	2.4 (47)	2.7 (50)	2.7 (59)	2.6 (51)
Post-Pre-seminar	2.0 (20)	2.5 (50)	2.5 (52)	2.2 (39)
Post-seminar	2.7 (60)	3.2 (79)	3.4 (90)	3.2 (84)

* 1=not at all; 2=somewhat; 3=comfortable; 4=very comfortable

"The instructions, FAQ, tips and conference call were very helpful in making us comfortable with this new way of conducting training."

"I participated in a previous e-seminar and was not nearly as prepared for the procedures the last time. This Time we were given much more help on working through the seminar."

Usefulness of Materials/Discussion

- Overall, 80-90% of the participants across years found the educational experience useful/very useful (no one reported that it was not useful).

	2001	2002	2003	2005	2006
Presentation Papers	3.8	3.3	3.4	3.5	3.8
Audio/PPT presentation	--	--	--	2.7	3.6
Discussion with panelist	3.5	3.3	3.2	3.3	3.2
Discussion with others	3.3	3.0	3.3	3.2	3.1

* 1=not at all; 2=somewhat; 3=useful; 4=very useful

"Practical and useful information with the research base. Ideas of what has been tried and successful (or not) all help those of us attempting to do programs. Good references to revert to during planning."

Helpfulness of Experience

- Each years, at least 80% of the participants agreed/strongly agreed that the experience was helpful and at least 90% planned to use what they learned.

	2001	2002	2003	2005	2006
Better understand topic	4.6	4.1	4.1	4.3	4.6
Have new ideas for working w/ the target audience	4.3	3.9	4.0	4.3	4.2
Stimulated in wanting to learn more about topic	4.4	4.2	3.9	4.3	4.4
Will use this information	4.5	4.1	4.3	4.4	4.6


* 1= strongly disagree; 5 = strongly agree

Satisfaction with the Experience

Percent who Agreed/Strongly Agreed

	2001	2002	2003	2005	2006
More effective if face-to-face	23	33	28	24	14
Easy to understand presentations	100	83	90	95	100
Satisfied with presentations	97	90	86	92	100
No problem with discussion board	70	63	86	86	94
Satisfied with discussion	93	80	79	84	86
As a whole, enjoyed participating	97	80	90	91	96
Want more trainings in this format	90	77	86	83	96
Would participate again	90	90	93	91	96

Engaging the learner on-line!

 **The discussion board provided participants an opportunity to engage in stimulating discussions about the research and implications for programs with national experts and colleagues from many states**

- ☺ *"The papers written by the panelists were excellent. At a "regular" in-service you never seem to get information in that depth. The opportunity to dialogue with the experts was exceptional – this couldn't happen in another format, at least in one that I could afford."*
- ☺ *"I especially liked the discussions and felt there was much more of this than if we had been meeting face to face."*
- ☺ *"I enjoyed reading comments from different people, and it gave me new perspectives and thoughts to consider."*
- ☺ *"I liked being able to ask specific questions and get responses from several presenters and participants."*

Flexibility – Critical!

💻 **The discussion was not in real time and therefore allowed participants to analyze, synthesize, and evaluate the readings and postings before responding.**

- 😊 *“The e-seminars are a great way to help us learn more about a specific topic, and how to utilize the information in our jobs. The flexibility of reading the information in advance, and logging on to the discussion as our schedule allows is excellent. Please do another one next year!”*
- 😊 *“I really liked being able to go back over parts of the information several times. It allows more time to think and process information.”*
- 😊 *“The e-seminar gives me the opportunity to update myself on topics that I deal with but might not spend 2-3 days on an in-service. Get more information through e-seminar than a 1 day training. Very cost effective.”*

Creating *Communities* of Interest!

💻 **The e-seminar provided participants the opportunity to interact and foster collaborations with colleagues that they normally would not have had the chance to meet.**

- 😊 *“It is great to be reminded that you are part of a professional community even though everyone has different backgrounds.”*
- 😊 *“While it is nice interacting in person, I felt I had a chance to “talk” to more people than I would at many conferences.”*
- 😊 *“I liked the opportunity to interact with colleagues who were working with the same issues and to learn that I wasn’t alone out there with these struggles and frustrations.”*
- 😊 *“The friendliness, empathy, and professional style of all the participants came through, even if it was only on a computer. I realized that I do have something to share with others that is useful and helpful.”*

Keys to Success....

- *The right panelists and presentation materials*
- *Adequate flexibility and preparation time*
- *Clear instructions presented in multiple formats*
- *Quality technical support staff*
- *Patience!*

Conclusion

- A useful forum for communicating information and stimulating program and professional development.
- Provides family life educators with opportunities to engage in dialogue with experts and colleagues in the field across (and outside of) their state
- Provides a flexible and cost-effective means of preparing educators!

"I got much more from this seminar than some I have attended on site, for a lot less investment of my time and county tax dollars. It was quite a bit more preparation time but was well worth it!"